Board of Director Meeting POINT December 12, 1971

Big Sur, California

Present:

Stewart Brand
Lois Brand
Bill English
Roberta English
Huey Johnson
Jerry Mander
Mike Phillips
Dick Raymond
Diana Shugart (Elijah Chair)

After baths and dinner, the meeting opened with a discussion of what we want to accomplish this round:

Dick: Do we want to accomplish what the Demise party failed to, or do we want to do the same thing Demise did? Our dilemma is whether we're after projects, or methods.

Stewart: Would like to begin developing an evolutionary process (in terms of our own procedures), and also take some specific steps.

Dick: We should try to summarize our own problem solving abilities by tomorrow; and try to reach some conclusion concerning priorities on projects; and define something that we can start to work on.

Huey: Wants to hail out a specific direction, possibly a project, plus delineating some basic policies.

Stewart: We need a clear definition of what the Board of Directors is for.

Jerry: We need a pounding out of the questions of how to develop a relevant style, meaning identity, rather than image.

Stewart: Do we want to try and make a lot more money, or do we want to relate to specific projects?

Mike: The answer to that will come out of more basic policy decisions. Agreed.

The papers which had been submitted were then evaluated on the basis of 1) usefulness and 2) how economically they arrive at that usefulness (elegance). Jerry suggested that Diana's paper be included in the evaluations, and everyone agreed. Dick's paper was judged to be the best.

Jerry: There was a lot of overlap in the papers; a number of the papers dealt with the issues of individual elegance vs. giving out grants vs. group efforts,etc. Do we have the beginning of a feeling for what we're about arriving out of these concerns?

Stewart: Would like to publish the papers. Huey's list is especially helpful, and may become a classic piece of research. Are there people with money who would be interested in finding and supporting activists, per Huey's paper?

Huey: It's very possible.

Stewart: How willing are we to let people in on our processes? How transparent do we want to be? How far do we want to go in saying "why" when we say "yes" or "no" to people?

Huey: Believes in simple rejections. For instance, the Fleischman Foundation in Nevada meets every day, and the first thing they do is throw out anyone who's been exposed to anything that might prejudice them on a request. They operate on a totally closed and cold basis. Simple.

Stewart: Has the opposite prejudice, due to the non-educational nature of that kind of procedure.It would be fascinating to revolutionize the foundation business, like the Whole Earth Catalog did the publishing business.

Jerry: It's a question of total honesty and openess vs. total secrecy. Anything else is bullshit.

Mike: But even if you're honest and open, that still doesn't tell you how to answer letters asking you for stuff.

Jerry: Has a fantasy of doing a kind of national Demise party, possibly an ad: Hey guys, we got a million dollars, and we're waiting for an inspiration.

Dick: There should be some sort of threshold people have to cross to have access to the papers, per Stewart's idea of publishing them. Dick's a little fed up along the "pearls before swine" dimension.

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S: We'll just put a price on it. We should have at least an annual publication. The first one will be the papers, some other stuff, a comic book-like cover.

Dick: Wants to dig into the content of the papers, and discuss the implications and consequences of some of the ideas. The papers have in common a propensity for individual and small group action, and for doing things with some levity. The most missing thing in the papers was the question "why?". Are we implying that we want to shape other people's behavior according to our own values? It seems like we are.

Stewart: We're essentially each trying to get our own thing off, and trying to get the world to welcome it. Our design problem is to evolve an institution that relates to personal fantasies.

Dick: Are we interested in internal groups, or outside groups? It can be a hard distinction to make, e.g. the "agent" idea.

Mike: The distinction is whether they come to us, or we go to them, i.e. where the interaction originates.

S: We should treat outside information as news, rather than requests, which puts the onus off the institution and onto the individual. We want to make it fun to be a foundation, rather than a pain in the ass.

Huey: What about having people write proposals as a filter, or a hurdle?

Mike: People who can write proposals can't do shit.

Stewart: If I'd had to write a proposal, I never would have done the Catalog.

Jerry: None of our own ideas for projects are particularly fundable, except possibly Huey's.

Stewart: Thing about Bill's proposal is that it will be done anyway. It's a bitchy idea, but in part it just means that POINT probably should just not do what other foundations are doing. Again like the Catalog, which did a lot of "instead ofs". What if we were the first foundation

ever?

Dick & Huey: Aw c'mon, we can't just ignore what we infact do know; if only in terms of what we don't want to do.

Jerry: We're dealing on two levels: there's the fact of the money, and then there's the myth or fantasy.

Mike: We could call a conference and have everyone write papers like we did, and then send the participants $50 a week anonymously.

Huey: The exercise of writing the paper is a good one in itself; perhaps we could use it further. How about giving some money to a millionaire? There are a lot of dropped-out industrialists; it might be worth finding and favoring them. Or how about an ad in the Wall St. Journal, saying we'll pay people to drop out and/or rat on their companies? Do we want to go into the business of attacking ecological ills directly?

Jerry: Just wants ron to know that they have the option of dropping out, that they don't have to stay on the treadmill.

Dick: Wants to encourage people to act autonomously, doesn't want to give money to individuals or to groups, likes the idea of an ad. But why is it such a good thing to drop out?

Jerry: Because the whole male acheivment/competition/abstract goals ethic is killing everyone. We need a different way to relate to our days; we should be able to just suggest that that's possible.

Dick: If we're into "ethic busting", the question becomes how to do it with the least effort, and most effectively? The papers indicate some shared values: Humaneness, honesty, levity, wholistic approaches - how do we implement these?

Mike: There's an interesting contradiction between Jerry's and Huey's approaches. Huey seems to be opting for "working within the system" - he believes that the system contains within it the possiblity for a lot of change, whereas Jerry seems to be saying that the system itself is at fault.

Stewart: It's a chicken and egg problem; or one of using whichever handle your hand fits.

Dick: Is uncomfortable with these concepts - we live in an evoutionary situation, we need different tactics, work on different levels, etc. It's time for a re-cap: we're after new playing strategies, as a way of breaking down the old ones - we need activists and agents in motion. I don't like the idea of Agency as a limit, but perhaps as part of a richer whole. How about we divide the million up into six shares, and everybody do their own thing? While we're at it, maybe we better get down to defining our role as Directors.

S: Before that, can we decide if we want to do some form of Peripheral Intelligence Agency?

Yes, we do.

Bill: Sees Dick and Stewart in a managerial capacity, Huey and Jerry less so.

S: Can Directors be agents?

Everyone says yes.

Jerry: Is very interested in a process-oriented Board, working without structures. If it feels good, it works. Most Boards are autocratic and/or bureaucratic and/or do nothing. I've never seen a Board that just didn't try to define itself too closely.

Dick: Maybe we should think of it as being six Boards, with each "Board" having five guys to help him/it.

General discussion of directors as agents:

Stewart: Part of the agent idea is that it involved employment, rather than funding, the latter being such a bitch. The $10,000 + $5,000 is an attempt to reduce hassle by establishing a formula. It also puts a lot of responsibility on the agent - he can give the money back, if he wants to.

Dick: If we give, for instance, Stewart $15,000, will he be working at

another job or not?

Everyone agreed that this would be up to the individual agent, and that the one-year limit would be a sort of "launching" for individuals, so that we're not leaving them in the lurch - i.e. they should have used the year so that they're well established and ready to move on at the end of it.

Mike: Is bothered by the concept of a salary, because it implies some sort of obligation.

Stewart: Our only question is what we're going to call it; the agent can do whateve he wants to do with it. We're paying for benefits, but the agents will determine what the benefits are. PIA will be determining something about what resourses they will have.

Midnight, baths, to bed. (shooting stars)

Morning, no coffee, plunge right in.

Dick: Reports that Portola is being pruned back. Whole Earth Truck Store and Big Rock Candy Mountain are being organized as separate companies. Since the nature of POINT will be changing and evolving, Portola can be used as a balance, and it can be left empty until it's clearer what's needed.

Mike: Distributes copies of the Glide Portfolio, and says that the white hat idea is a farce. The only studies done on investment potential show simply that the public's idea of various companies has nothing to do with what's actually going on. Research is very much needed, and POINT could possibly be active in filing suits (public service lawsuits) against "bad" companies; in such cases the lawyers do the fighting, and the originator of the suit gets damages. It could be a job for an agent, in that if we get involved in active pursuit in that area, people could come to us and ask us to sue in their behalf.

Jerry: It wouldn't ever require an agent - just one staff person; and we could stir up trouble, and put philosophical input into companies.

Agreed by consensus: That the Glide Portfolio by adopted as presented.

Stewart: We need some further role definitions.

Dick: We may have administrative problems if we try to do a lot of different things. How much time do the directors have to devote to POINT and/or to agenting?

Stewart: Is Point interested in being a short lag responsive organization Everyone agrees yes.

Mike: Has time, but wouldn't want the agent money.

Bill: Doesn't too much want the agent role right now, but could use the funds to further his project, probably through Xerox.

Huey: Has about 10% time, might use the activist idea to "hire energy". Is oriented in an overall way to "land policy", and would probably stick with Nature Conservancy.

Dick: Is at a pretty open point in his life, wouldn't want to take funds out of POINT, might want to do a reverue-producing project.

Jerry: Doesn't want to do any of his ideas right now.

Dick: Agent/Directors can wear the POINT hat or not, depending on the usefulness of it.

Stewart: Would like it that POINT doesn't have to be too careful; individual agents can be or not.

Dick: Has a strong instinct to do very little as POINT per se.

Diana: Would be good to minimize administration as much as possible.

Mike: We shouldn't try to identify what POINT is too much - it will identify itself through it's own process.

Stewart: Is concerned about not restricting agents, and about POINT's visibility.

Dick: Sees a scheme whereby POINT operates like a syndicate, with each person having responsibility for a portfolio of ideas, missions, tasks. Loosely organized, can meet by phone, in a bar, whatever; in the manner of Steve Levy's "club", or the "mother ship" notion. This idea didn't work for Portola because the people involved weren't adults. (autonomous

competent).

Stewart: Wants our message to the world to be that we're not doing anything right now, and we'll report when we have something to report.

Dick: Another model is that of a law firm.

Jerry: Similar also to Gossage's shade tree model, a system for management for satellite people, who needed routine support for their projects, plus some contact with similar people, and a sense of community.

Mike: What about Dick's idea of having $2\frac{1}{2}$ million in 7 years?

Stewart: Doesn't want that as a top priority, tho it would be nice. We need to spend some along the way.

There was general discussion about money, agreement that a priority is not to waste money - economy as we go along.

Mike: We're not as interested in the $2\frac{1}{2}$ mil per se as in being able to measure our regenerative powers.

Jerry: But we'd like to be able to just piss it away, if it looks like that's what will do the most good. We want to operate on the basis that that isn't our main consideration.

Stewart: What about the 3 year deadline for Directors?

Everyone likes it. It would be a separate decision if the Board asks anyone back. We'll all be gone by January 75.

Stewart: Wants to institutionalize the meanness.

Agreed by consensus: That all Directors and Staff are required to quit within three years, or else they'll be automatically fired, with the provision that after one year off, there's a ~~n extremely~~ remote possibility of being re-hired.

Stewart: Yay. It means that the individual has to build himself at least as much as the institution, because he's going to lose the institution.

Stewart moves, and it is

Agreed by consensus: 1) That next meeting each Board Member be formally considered for ~~made~~ Agent status

2) That each Board member submit names for possible agents at the next

meeting, so that we can have up to 12 agents operative by February.

3) That the agents will be picked from the whole group suggested by the Board as a group.

Stewart: How about the host for each meeting also chooses who to occupy the Elijah chair?

OK.

Stewart: How are we going to vote? Decide things? What's our procedure? Majority? Consensus? Unanimity?

Diana: Is very fond of consensus and suggests that we adopt it.

Agreed by consensus.

Mike: Will send out a proposal on investment policy before the next meeting - some action we can take within the portfolio.

Stewart proposes and it is

Agreed by consensus: That we make an edited transcript of the tape of this meeting, and submit it to the Directors before publishing it.

Dick: What shall we call the agents' money? Study grants? Salaries? For formal purposes.

Stewart: We can't separate the formality from the reality - we need Larry's advice and ideas. We also must ask him if we're self-dealing if Directors are agents.

It was agreed to pay Stewart $250 month, and Lois $200 a month in their capacity as administrative staff.

Baths, lunch, home again, home again, jiggity jog.

Submitted with levity,

DS

Diana Shugart